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# **Philippine Counterinsurgency: Prospects for Improvement Under the Aquino Government**

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**An Intelligence Assessment**

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*EA 86-10040  
September 1986*

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# **Philippine Counterinsurgency: Prospects for Improvement Under the Aquino Government**

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**An Intelligence Assessment**

This paper was prepared by [redacted]  
[redacted] the Office of East Asian Analysis.  
Comments and queries are welcome and may be  
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**Scope Note**

This paper is intended to provide an estimate of  
Philippine counterinsurgency capabilities as the new leadership in Manila  
is attempting to set a more effective course for the armed forces.

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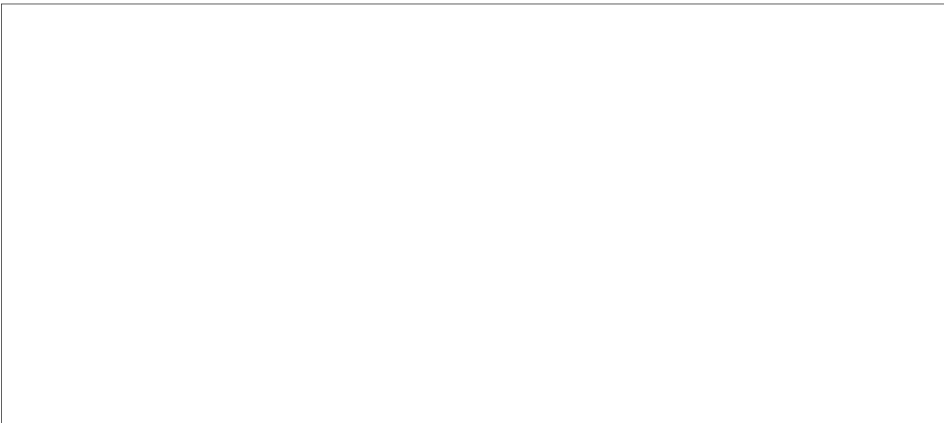
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**Key Judgments**

*Information available  
as of 1 August 1986  
was used in this report.*

In our judgment, the Aquino government in its first six months in power has made modest progress in efforts to reform the military so it can stop the spread of the Communist insurgency and restore government control throughout the country. The almost overwhelming challenge the government faces is the longstanding politicization of the armed forces under former President Marcos, which institutionalized favoritism, graft, and corruption among senior officers and created a military short on the motivation, leadership, supplies, training, and operational intelligence needed for a successful counterinsurgency campaign.

To improve the professionalism of the Army, President Aquino has:

- Replaced senior officers extended on duty past retirement with combat-experienced professionals selected by her Chief of Staff, General Ramos, and Defense Minister Enrile.
- Approved a reorganization of the Defense Ministry and the military and civilian intelligence apparatus.
- Ordered the transfer of men and equipment from largely ceremonial duties in Manila to field units.
- Approved a counterinsurgency plan based on small unit operations in place of the large sweep operations that had frequently been more effective in driving civilians into the arms of the Communists than in inflicting damage on the insurgents.

According to Embassy and [ ] these efforts have helped convince many military officers of the seriousness of Aquino's intention to eliminate the worst military abuses and have increased public respect for the military.

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Aquino also has changed her position against military aid, now favoring increased US assistance. Recognition that the military needs more counterinsurgency resources regardless of the outcome of her cease-fire strategy provides an important opportunity for the United States to restore its once-close relationship with the Philippine military and to encourage a more realistic counterinsurgency strategy. Through training at US facilities in the Pacific and the United States, a younger generation of Philippine military leaders could acquire needed combat skills and close ties to and confidence in the United States.

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On the negative side, the fact that the insurgency has gained considerable momentum over the past three years and that Aquino and her closest advisers are inexperienced in military affairs complicates the outlook for a counterinsurgency campaign. In our judgment, it will take time for professionalizing reforms to take hold throughout the military. Moreover, the government has not abandoned using the military for political ends, as seen in Aquino's recent decision to override the military's seniority system and promote a relatively junior marine colonel who had won the admiration of some of her civilian advisers, even at the expense of her image of commitment to military professionalism.

Aquino faces other obstacles to successful counterinsurgency operations, and she can tackle them only when relations between the military and the civilian government improve. The most important task, in our view, is for the government to devise—and fund—a coordinated counterinsurgency strategy that includes a heavy dose of civic action and rural development programs, a strategy similar to that used to defeat the Huks in the early 1950s. Financing the broad range of needed improvements is in principle not beyond the capabilities of the Philippine Government, but the weak economy and competing demands for resources from civilian agencies will make increased funding problematic.

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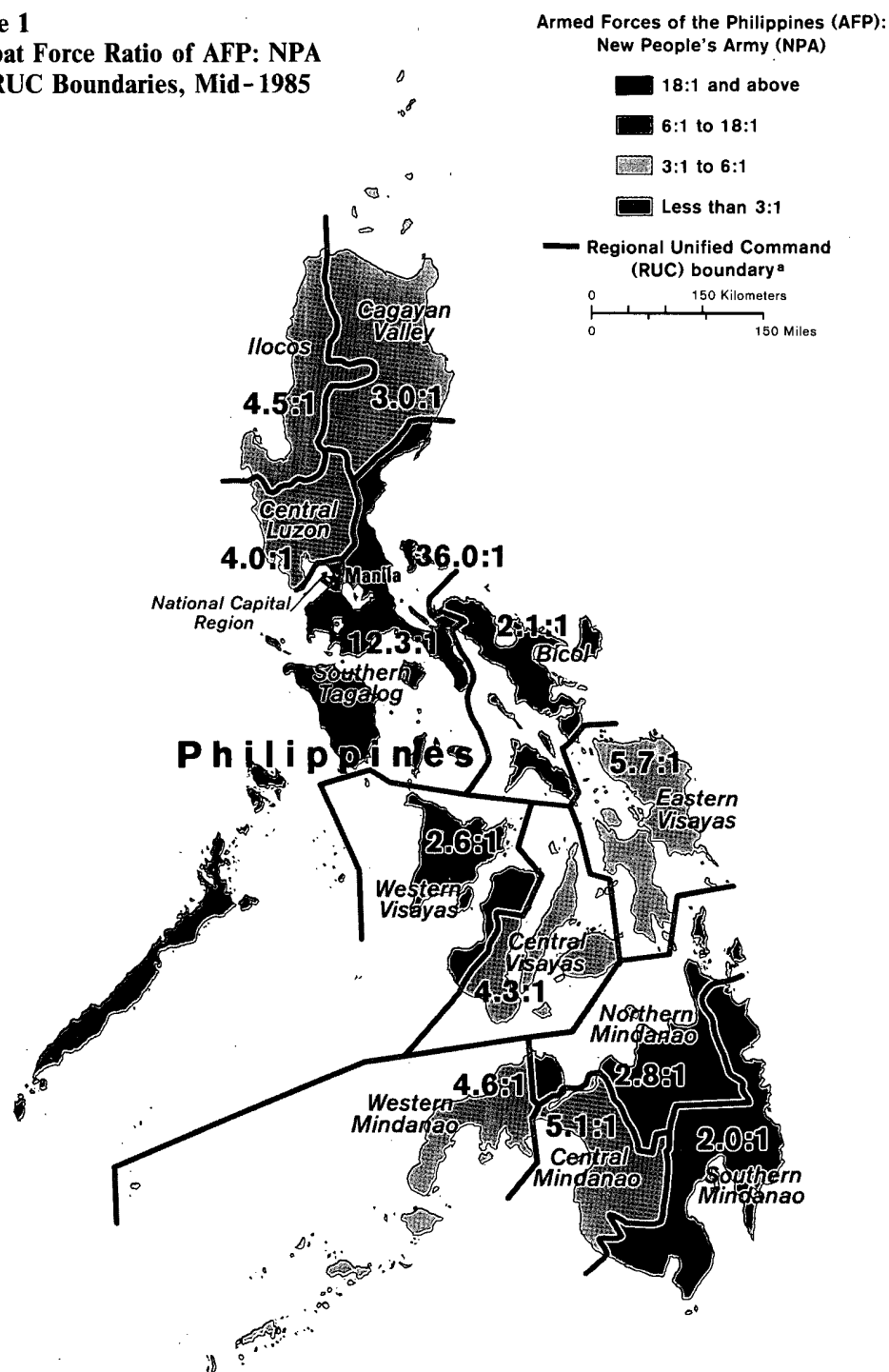
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**Figure 1**  
**Combat Force Ratio of AFP: NPA**  
**and RUC Boundaries, Mid-1985**



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**Philippine Counterinsurgency:  
Prospects for Improvement  
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**New Opportunities, Potential Pitfalls**

The change in government in February 1986 brought hope to many in the Philippine military that the rapid growth of the Communist Party of the Philippines and its military wing, the New People's Army (NPA), could be reversed.<sup>1</sup> President Aquino has identified defusing the insurgency as one of her major priorities and has commenced a thorough shakeup of the armed forces through the Chief of Staff, Gen. Fidel Ramos, and Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile to accomplish this. The new leadership, however, must work with much of the same institutional apparatus and most of the same personnel, particularly at the unit level, that conducted counterinsurgency operations under former President Marcos, and it is not yet clear that Aquino will have any more success.

We do not expect dramatic progress in the counterinsurgency effort any time soon, especially in ameliorating its systemic problems: rooting out corruption; alleviating financial constraints; and executing a comprehensive, civil-military approach to the insurgency. (See appendix A for a detailed treatment of each.) The fact that Aquino and her closest advisers have much to learn about military affairs complicates the outlook. Despite plans to create a Committee on National Reconciliation and the military's preparation of a new counterinsurgency plan, for example, the government's approach so far has been to place the military on the defensive while trying to encourage the insurgents to surrender. In addition, Aquino's decision to

create a National Security Council—long urged by military leaders—is steeped in political considerations. The US Embassy reports that the Council is viewed by most Filipinos as an attempt to placate Defense Minister Enrile, and thus it is unlikely to make significant progress in formulating a long-range amnesty program, an economic response to the causes of the insurgency, and coordinating counterinsurgency at the national level.

In our judgment, the government's lack of a comprehensive counterinsurgency strategy reflects Aquino's reluctance to use military force against the insurgents while she remains preoccupied with organizing and running her government. Struggles for power and influence within her Cabinet and among government ministries continue to slow policy formulation and implementation, while Aquino's doubts about Enrile's integrity have made her reluctant to seek his advice or grant him too much authority to formulate counterinsurgency policy. Moreover, Aquino's dissolution of the National Assembly and her replacement of elected provincial officials with government-designated officers in charge have galvanized the political opposition, further diverting attention in the Cabinet from counterinsurgency issues.

Fiscal constraints are likely to preclude a significant expansion or force upgrade of the armed forces for the near term, and they also are likely to reduce sharply the immediate effectiveness of government amnesty and civic action programs. For example, in 1984 the government in real terms spent only about two-thirds of what it spent on the military in 1980 and approximately half what it spent near the end of the Muslim rebellion in Mindanao in 1977. Philippine defense expenditures continue to be hard hit by budgetary restraints mandated by the International Monetary Fund and, although exact figures are unavailable, real dollar expenditures are likely to decline again this year.

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**Order of Battle—The Philippine Armed Forces**

*The New Armed Forces of the Philippines (NAFP) consists of approximately 150,000 personnel divided among a Presidential Security Group and four co-equal services—the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Constabulary.*

**Presidential Security Group**

- Formerly a five-battalion, 2,000-man Presidential Security Command that protected Marcos and senior VIPs.
- Reduced in March 1986 to a company-size unit responsible only for protection of President.

**Army**

- 70,000 men organized into five infantry divisions, one Scout Ranger regiment, one light armor regiment, two engineer brigades, and a signal group.
- Combat operations executed by 44 infantry battalions assigned to 12 Regional Unified Commands (RUCs).
- Most battalions only half-strength at 500 men; many units short weapons, ammunition, radios, trucks, fuel, food, uniforms, and boots.

**Navy**

- 28,000 men, including 3,000-man Coast Guard and 9,300-man Marine Corps.
- Active fleet consists of 135 ex-US Navy, World War II-era escorts, patrol boats, and landing craft.

**Navy (continued)**

- Capable of conducting only limited defensive operations.
- Eight battalion Marine Corps regarded as most professional NAFP element.

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**Air Force**

- 16,400 men and approximately 175 active aircraft.
- Major aircraft include 24 C-130s, 13 F-5s, 18 F-8s, and 84 helicopters.
- Close air support, transport, and air defense roles routinely hampered by fuel shortages, inadequate training and maintenance, and personal use of aircraft by senior officers.

**Constabulary**

- Oldest AFP element; total manpower about 38,500.
- Organized nationwide into 225 companies of about 90 men each.
- Frequent insurgent target because its units are small and widely dispersed and have a history of corruption and abuse.
- Responsible for training and administering the Integrated Civil Home Defense Force (ICHDF), a 70,000-man, paramilitary, village-level protection force. ICHDF units are infamous for poor discipline, corruption, and abuse.
- Merged with 50,000-man Integrated National Police (INP) in 1975.

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Even with additional assistance from the United States, the armed forces are likely to require several years before the supply, logistic, and maintenance systems are capable of supporting expanded counter-insurgency operations. Infrastructure development, agricultural reforms, and job creation programs in the civil sector are also likely to require an extended period before they significantly improve living conditions for many Filipinos. Finally, a continued soft market for the Philippines' two major exports—coconuts and sugar—seriously threatens the prospects for the kind of economic recovery needed to solve many of the problems that have led to the insurgency.

Prospects that the Aquino government will regain the initiative over the Communist insurgents are better over the longer term, in our judgment. The military gained significant prestige as a result of its role in removing Marcos, and Ramos and Enrile have continued to garner popular support by appointing military professionals to replace senior officers discredited by their close association with Marcos. Moreover, the new government's willingness to move against former Marcos political allies and military personnel accused of corruption and human rights abuses has helped it retain public approval outside Manila, according to Embassy reporting.

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The key question, in our judgment, is whether the government or the insurgents will be the first to address their respective root problems. (Appendix B provides a detailed assessment of Manila's counterinsurgency successes and failures.) The Communist Party continues to attempt to reconcile differences over strategy in the wake of Marcos's fall from power. If history is any guide, the party is likely to overcome internal differences and return to capitalizing on government mistakes and shortcomings. This suggests that Aquino will have only a brief period to develop and implement an integrated civil-military counterinsurgency strategy while simultaneously attempting to correct serious deficiencies in military transportation, maintenance, logistics, and communication. [redacted]

#### The Role of the New Leadership

Although bureaucratic inertia and fiscal constraints are likely to continue to restrict improvements in many areas for the near term, the entry of a new generation into the senior ranks of the armed forces during the next several years could lay the groundwork for major changes later this decade. Aquino has already improved military leadership at the senior level by replacing most of the senior officers Marcos had extended on duty past retirement with combat-experienced professionals selected by Ramos and Enrile. Officers like Vice Chief of Staff Mison and Army commander Canieso, for example, are representative of the many combat-experienced professionals occupying the middle and senior grades in the New Armed Forces of the Philippines (NAFP)—a title chosen to highlight a break with the past under Marcos. Several are graduates of US service academies, and nearly all acquired combat experience during the Muslim insurgency on Mindanao during the 1970s. [redacted]

(Appendix C compares the Aquino and Marcos military leaderships.) [redacted]

In a move aimed at eliminating corruption and improving administrative efficiency, Aquino has approved Enrile's reorganization of the Defense Ministry and his selection of highly respected, retired Gen. Rafael Ito as Deputy Defense Minister. She also abolished the National Intelligence and Security Authority (NISA)—the onetime power base of former Chief of Staff Ver—and reduced the Presidential Security Command from several thousand to several hundred, which has allowed redeployment of the troops to the field. [redacted]

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Ramos and Enrile, meanwhile, have begun to tackle problems caused by abuses of authority and shortages of manpower and equipment. In March 1986 they issued directives to disarm and disband private armies and paramilitary groups such as the notorious "Lost Command"; to forbid Home Defense Forces, Constabulary, and Police personnel from being used as private guards; to limit military powers of search and seizure in criminal matters; and to relieve from duty military personnel accused of human rights violations. In what apparently is both a budgetary and a disciplinary move, Ramos has directed local commanders to screen thoroughly all members of the Civil Home Defense Force, and to retain only those qualified to assist in security operations. Orders also have been issued requiring promotions and assignments to be based on merit and performance, and plans were prepared for providing instruction on democratic values to all personnel. Enforcing these directives has been difficult in some areas of Luzon and Mindanao, however, because of deep-seated loyalties to Marcos, according to the US Embassy. [redacted]

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To improve combat capabilities of field units, Ramos has begun to reassign excess clerical and administrative personnel from Manila to the field. Additional manpower and equipment are being provided by the removal of military personnel from guard duty at government businesses and casinos. According to press reports, some of the excess equipment from Manila, including armored personnel carriers, had already reached the field by mid-March. The defense

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**Ramos and Enrile:  
Architects of a New Effort**

*The change in government that brought Aquino to power also transferred control of the armed forces from Marcos and Ver to Ramos and Enrile. Both have brought to their new positions shared concerns about the effectiveness of the counterinsurgency effort and the coordination of that effort within the government. For example, Ramos—as Acting Chief of Staff—worked to increase the number of Army battalions available for the counterinsurgency, while also moving to tackle longstanding problems such as corruption, human rights abuses, and civil-military relations. For his part, Enrile initiated an effort to use Marcos-approved civil-military organizations and security plans in an effort to improve local counterinsurgency coordination.* [ ]

*Ramos recently has achieved partial success in his effort to improve counterinsurgency assets by activating six new battalions, setting up a third engineer brigade, and completing plans for activating five more maneuver battalions out of a planned eight new infantry battalions, three engineer battalions, and four Scout Ranger companies. Last October, Ramos also formed new units called Special Field Reaction Forces, which consisted of Constabulary and National Police personnel who had received special counterinsurgency training similar to the Army's Scout Rangers.* [ ]

*During his tenure as Acting Chief of Staff, Ramos also moved to reestablish an emphasis on professionalism by tackling equipment shortages, pay and benefits issues, corruption, favoritism, and human rights abuses. Although he never was able to implement major reforms, such as the removal of senior officers extended on duty past retirement or the replacement of personnel accused of corrupt or abusive behavior, Ramos firmly established the reform issue on the military's agenda. Among other things, he:*

- *Obtained over 2,000 new M-16 rifles for distribution to the Constabulary and Integrated National Police, and began distribution to field units of some of the 250 used cargo trucks acquired from the United States.*
- *Established a system of cash incentives to reward successful combat performance against the insurgents.*
- *Announced a 32-percent pay raise for soldiers and a 17-percent raise for officers, as well as an increase in combat pay from \$7 to \$14 per month.*

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- *Created a system of disciplinary barracks and retraining and reeducation programs designed to instill professionalism and punish abusive personnel and demoralized troops.*
  - *Established a seven-man committee at AFP Headquarters to investigate complaints of military abuses. He also added new members to existing Police and Constabulary boards dealing with promotions and military conduct.*
  - *Granted increased authority to local commanders to screen and train Civil Home Defense Force recruits and to investigate and punish criminal and abusive behavior.*
- The military also has scored several public relations successes in the last year, despite public cynicism and resource constraints. Among the more notable achievements were:*
- *Establishment of a Defense Ministry propaganda unit to coordinate all government media releases about the insurgency and government counterinsurgency programs.*
  - *The showing of the movie The Killing Fields by AFP Civil Relations Service field personnel as part of the effort to increase public awareness of the dangers of a Communist victory.*
  - *The release of a "White Paper on the Insurgency" to educate the public on the background of the insurgency.*
  - *The creation of a "Filipino ideology" campaign for government employees and military personnel in an effort to counter negative self-images fostered by NPA propaganda.*
  - *The provision of medical and dental assistance by AFP personnel to nearly a quarter million persons in remote areas.*
  - *Disaster relief in Central and Northern Luzon following destructive typhoons.*
  - *Announcement of a \$55 million National Civic Action Plan designed to enhance economic development in insurgent areas by using military engineer assets to build roads, bridges, and schools. The plan was to be jointly administered by the military, Defense Ministry, National Economic Development Authority, and the Ministry of Public Works and Housing.*
  - *The establishment of an amnesty program that rehabilitated and resettled approximately 500 insurgents and their supporters.*

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**Figure 2. Architects of the revolution: former Armed Forces Vice Chief of Staff Fidel Ramos and Defense Minister Juan Ponce Enrile announce their break with President Marcos, February 1986**

attache reports, however, that units in the field find they lack the infrastructure necessary to absorb the men and equipment being sent from Manila.

to replace Marcos's Operation *Katagan*. The new plan—named *Mamamayan*—shifts the focus of counterinsurgency operations from large-scale military sweep operations to using the Army, Air Force, and Marines to support expanded operations by the Constabulary, Police, and Home Defense Forces.<sup>2</sup> The Navy and the Air Force, moreover, are to be reduced in size and reassigned as support elements for the ground forces. The Regional Unified Command structure will be retained for the time being to facilitate the other aspects of the plan.

### Some Priority Tasks

Although we judge that professionalization and adequate financing of the armed forces are the critical elements in improving counterinsurgency effectiveness, several other tasks are virtual “musts” in the near term, according to numerous

<sup>2</sup> *Katagan* means stability or firmness and *Mamamayan* means citizen in Pilipino, the official Philippine language

Embassy reports. One key to improving the NAFP's performance against the insurgents lies in shifting the armed forces from their focus on both internal and external defense to a more narrowly focused counterinsurgency strategy.

none of the forces currently assigned external defense roles—approximately two fighter squadrons and eight ex-US Navy destroyer escorts—provides a credible defense, and efforts to modernize or replace these forces will be prohibitively expensive.

Ramos and Enrile and the service chiefs already have decided to reduce expenditures for external defense programs; the Navy, for example, has been directed to defer the modernization of old ships and the purchase of new vessels, while the Air Force has been asked to investigate the sale of its maintenance-intensive fleet of 20-year-old, US-built F-8 interceptors.

Another critical task under way, is the shift in combat tactics from large-unit (brigade and battalion) sweep operations launched from statically defended fixed installations to small-unit (company and platoon) tactics. All too often, the sweep operations have sought to use heavy firepower and airstrikes to compensate for the shortage of troops on the ground, rather than to coordinate air-ground operation. By shifting to small-unit combat tactics and emphasizing the use of air and naval forces to enhance mobility rather than firepower, the NAFP—assuming it adequately trains, equips, and supports the small units—should be able to wage a less costly and more effective fight against the insurgents. Moreover, the shift to small units offers the prospect of reestablishing a more permanent military presence in the countryside, which—just as in the war against the Huks 35 years ago—will provide the security for the government to restore political control outside Manila. (Appendix D examines the difficulties associated with such a task.)

Despite Enrile's and Ramos's start at rooting out corruption, the NAFP's ineffective, outdated, and easily corrupted supply systems remain intact and chronically short of equipment and materiel. The logistic problem, according to the

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**Figure 3. Armored advantage: Army V-150 "Commando" armored car in use during operations in the Cagayan Valley, Northern Luzon, 1985. The NAFP recently has tried to allocate one V-150 to each Army battalion to increase unit responsiveness and survivability during NPA ambushes.** [redacted]



**Figure 4. AFP tactical mobility: Philippine Navy LST delivers Army M-35 truck of the 46th Infantry Battalion, Panay, 1985. On average, each Army battalion (approximately 500 to 600 men) has two of these trucks to provide tactical mobility and a heavy transport capability.** [redacted]

goes beyond simply the shortage of funds to provide the basic supplies—food, fuel, spare parts, arms, uniforms, boots, or bullets—to troops in the field. Major improvements to the logistic and maintenance systems—particularly in the field—will be required if equipment such as radios, armored cars, and helicopters are to be kept operational and the NAFP is to take advantage of the reforms it may make in tactics, training, and intelligence. [redacted]

Correcting transportation and communications shortfalls is essential to providing the armed forces with the mobility and command and control it requires to engage insurgent forces more actively. Without improvements in these areas, the military will remain tied to a static, defensive strategy, and it will be less capable of ferreting out and attacking platoon and company-size NPA units before they ambush military forces or strike government installations. Moreover, improved mobility and communications will remain critical even if the military retains its current tactics, because these would offset the insurgents' advantage of surprise by improving the government's ability to reinforce immediately units under attack. [redacted]

In addition to tactical radios and cargo trucks, the NAFP will require more light armored personnel carriers, scout cars, and helicopters if it is to contest

actively NPA control of areas on Mindanao and Northern Luzon. [redacted]

[redacted] More of these vehicles and aircraft also will be necessary to offset combat losses as well as to provide field units with adequate direct fire support, close air support, resupply, and medical evacuation.<sup>3</sup> [redacted]

One of the military's most urgent requirements is to restructure its training system. The current system provides neither adequate instruction nor motivation for soldiers because it requires poorly equipped, demoralized units to provide on-the-job training to new recruits, according to [redacted] Once a recruit is assigned to a unit, individual opportunities for advanced training are limited because of manpower constraints and combat requirements. [redacted]

In our judgment, solving this problem requires adequately equipped, fully staffed, central training facilities for basic and advanced individual and unit training. Although this would be costly and time

[redacted] and press reports, insurgents on Mindanao already have destroyed government armored vehicles with homemade landmines, and several helicopters are reported to have been downed by insurgent machinegun fire. [redacted]

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consuming and would compete with combat requirements for manpower, over the long term it appears to offer the best prospects for improving morale and combat effectiveness. Such facilities would provide the military with adequate time and resources to teach ground forces personnel—Army, Constabulary, and Police—the basic combat skills and advanced counterinsurgency tactics, including intelligence and psychological operations, and to develop both the individual pride and unit cohesion that the current system has failed to deliver. At a later date, the government could expand this training to the Navy, Coast Guard, and Air Force if resource constraints permit. We believe Marines and Army Scout Rangers would benefit less from these training centers because their existing training programs already provide sufficient combat instruction and individual motivation.

As for intelligence, the effort remains in disarray because of Aquino's mistrust of the intelligence community.

It is too early to tell if the National Intelligence Coordination Authority—a new national level, control and coordination body—is capable of focusing intelligence collection and operations against the insurgency.

In our judgment, the government can use Aquino's popularity, along with a cease-fire and amnesty program, to complement existing intelligence efforts to develop a detailed, tactical order of battle on the insurgency. At the same time, the government must reestablish an intelligence capability in the countryside with the human and financial resources necessary to acquire, and the communications capabilities necessary to exploit rapidly, information in support of

### *Philippine Intelligence: An Asset?*

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*progovernment newspapers have reported that the NPA's fear of government penetrations on Mindanao last year led the insurgents to institute restrictive screening procedures for accepting government deserters and even to execute guerrillas suspected of being government informers. Communist leaders now may be even more concerned about government intelligence operations, particularly if popular support for Aquino and continued insurgent violence against civilians lead many lower level guerrillas and guerrilla supporters to inform on their superiors.*

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Figure 5. Civic action in action: Philippine Army officer distributes medicine to villagers, Luzon, 1985

military and security force operations. In our judgment, the government will be unable to restore an effective civil presence to the countryside without such an intelligence effort.

Government civil relations efforts go hand in hand with intelligence activities. Civic action programs—medical assistance teams, road repair, or school construction—establish a climate favorable to intelligence activities, while civil relations personnel attached to military units can serve as buffers between the military and local populations, thereby reducing

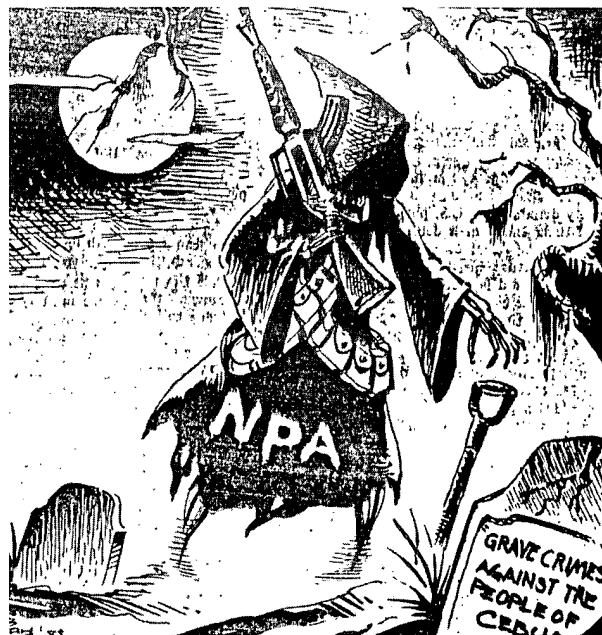


Figure 6. Counterpropaganda: editorial cartoon reminding the people of Cebu that the NPA also has committed its share of atrocities.

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the prospects for military human rights abuses. Finally, counterpropaganda and psychological operations personnel—working with local elected officials—must be available to counter Communist propaganda and present the government's response to Communist-instigated rumors and charges of military abuse.

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#### The US Connection

Military aid from the United States, Australia, and Indonesia already has helped the NAFP maintain at least a minimum combat capability, and the future level of multilateral assistance will be a key factor in determining the success of Manila's counterinsurgency capabilities. US military assistance, by far the largest amount, is equal to more than 15 percent of the Philippine military budget for 1986, compared with an assistance contribution averaging 10 percent of the budget over the previous five years. From

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### *The Role of Foreign Assistance*

Since 1980 the United States has provided Manila \$265 million in foreign military sales (FMS) credits, \$75 million in military assistance program (MAP) grants, and \$340 million in US-bases-related economic support fund (ESF) assistance under terms of the 1983 bases review. In 1985 the United States provided the armed forces more counterinsurgency-specific assistance in the form of over 250 used cargo trucks to help improve their limited transportation capability, and individual-issue items such as boots and uniforms were provided to overcome materiel shortages and to restore morale and combat effectiveness. The United States also provided mobile training teams, technical specialists, and contractor support to help the AFP correct training, maintenance, and supply deficiencies. A Philippine request to use some \$21 million in ESF appropriations to purchase heavy construction equipment for three new military engineer battalions remains under consideration [redacted]

Australian military assistance to the Philippines increased from \$780,000 in the period 1978-79 to approximately \$1.3 million in 1984-85, an inflation-adjusted increase of about 26 percent. Most of these funds were used to provide technical training and professional education in Australia for Philippine personnel, although Canberra dispatched technicians

and support personnel to the Philippines to instruct the AFP in the operation of Australian-supplied communications and electronics equipment. According to the press, Australia intends to resume the nonlethal military assistance that it suspended during Marcos's last days. This assistance reportedly could include medical supplies, portable radios, spare parts, and possibly trucks and transport aircraft. [redacted]

Indonesia—the most recent donor—in mid-January 1986 provided the Philippine Air Force two light transport aircraft complete with crews and maintenance personnel on a 90-day loan. According to the US Embassy in Jakarta, Indonesia provided the aircraft to reinforce contacts between the two countries' armed forces and to encourage similar assistance from other members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Further Indonesian aid remains problematic because of budget austerity brought on by Jakarta's declining oil export revenues. We judge, nevertheless, that Jakarta has established an important precedent for the rest of non-Communist Southeast Asia by attempting to institute a military-to-military approach to supporting Philippine counterinsurgency programs. [redacted]

Manila's perspective, the political risk associated with accepting further assistance is heightened by growing nationalism and leftist-inspired propaganda. Senior Philippine military officers have made it clear to US Embassy officials that they want US assistance, but they have also stated that they are in the best position to decide what equipment is needed and how it should be used. [redacted]

Despite these constraints, the Aquino government's desire for increased military assistance provides the United States an opportunity to restore its formerly close relationship with the Philippine military. We believe this relationship suffered over the last decade as the Philippines under Marcos and Ver became more of a political instrument of the former President

than a force to counter the insurgency. [redacted] confirms that an entire generation of junior and midlevel officers—including reformist officers involved in the ouster of Marcos—have a more nationalistic, less positive impression of the United States. Such an impression has important long-range implications because many of these officers will influence Philippine policy during the resumption of the base negotiations in 1987 and 1988. [redacted]

Offsetting these benefits, however, are the dangers of too close a relationship with the NAFF. An increased US advisory presence in the Philippines—particularly

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were it to involve training and assisting combat units in the countryside—almost certainly would result in attacks on these personnel by Communist insurgents.

[ ] the Communist leadership already has approved such attacks if US personnel are involved in assisting Philippine military operations against the NPA. [ ]

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The Communists are not the only group concerned about closer US relations with the NAFP. According to the press, Aquino and many of her closest advisers remain uncomfortable with the military because of its record of abuse under Marcos. Close ties between the US military and the NAFP thus could reinforce the belief among many Aquino supporters that the military—and the United States—has too great an influence over government counterinsurgency strategy.

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## Appendix A

### Major Armed Forces Problems

#### Counterinsurgency in Theory and Practice

Manila has not failed in its bid to turn back the NPA for lack of planning. As early as 1982, for example, continuing Communist insurgent activity prompted the armed forces leadership to develop a nationwide government plan—Operation *Katatagan*—designed to integrate civil and military counterinsurgency components. Previous military operations had proved that the insurgency could be suppressed—at least temporarily—with troop deployments. But they highlighted the need for a coordinated effort by senior military and government officials to restore public confidence in the government to undercut the insurgency's mass appeal. The plan called for a joint effort by military and civilian ministries at the national level and provided a framework for:

- Reinvigorating government infrastructure to provide health care, timely administration of justice, and new legislation to address issues such as land reform—all of which are grievances exploited by the NPA.
- Changing traditional combat tactics from the use of small rifle squads to larger infantry battalions and broadening soldiers' responsibilities to include civic action duties.
- Improving overall military performance by providing specialized training in psychological warfare, intelligence, and counterintelligence.
- Tightening military discipline by more vigorous training for troops and harsher disciplinary action against military personnel suspected of committing human rights abuses or involvement in illegal activity.

Because *Katatagan*—still in place when the new government assumed power in February 1986—offered a broad spectrum of counterinsurgency assumptions and prescriptions, we believe understanding its

failure holds many of the keys to correcting armed forces deficiencies. Despite initial efforts, the government's guidelines for military reform—including better training for soldiers and stricter disciplinary action for human rights abuses—were not vigorously pursued by most military commanders, [redacted]

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[redacted] The US Embassy also reports that the civic action programs that were to complement *Katatagan*—including plans to aid farmers suffering from a severe drought in 1982/83—never got off the drawing board or fizzled before completion. [redacted]

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Meanwhile, the expansion of military operations under the auspices of *Katatagan* served to further alienate much of the rural population. Most combat units, for example, received a rapid influx of poorly trained troops who soon committed human rights abuses against civilians under the guise of ferreting out subversives. These incidents rapidly alienated rural youth, thus swelling the ranks of the insurgents. [redacted]

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The two major military operations carried out in 1984

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[redacted] highlight Manila's lack of commitment to the vigorous application of *Katatagan* [redacted]. Despite large troop deployments and government claims of impressive victories, reports indicate that both operations failed to improve the security situation or change the military balance in either region. Government claims of several hundred insurgents killed or captured were widely exaggerated, according to the [redacted] and the Communist party political [redacted] and military infrastructure were hardly shaken. [redacted]

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**Examples of Two Operational Failures**

**Luzon.** According to a reliable source, operation Hammerhead—undertaken in 1984—was designed to break the Communist Party's political and military structure in Northern Luzon and to reassert government authority over a major highway that was under insurgent control. It combined the military resources of two regional commands, including several infantry battalions and a Philippine Air Force unit. The defense attache reports that the plan consisted of several large sweep operations, daily foot patrols by smaller units, and an airstrike against an insurgent base targeted by military intelligence. The government reported progress throughout the three-month operation and claimed in the end to have secured the road and "cleansed the area" of insurgents. [redacted]

In view of subsequent reporting by the Embassy and the defense attache, the military actually achieved few tangible results. Government troops encountered few insurgents because the insurgents' better intelligence allowed them to avoid the military's airstrikes and search and destroy efforts. According to a reliable source, field commanders complained about inadequate signaling devices, insufficient foul-weather gear, and shortages of combat rations, medicine, and tactical communications equipment. The source reports, for example, that communications difficulties forced military units to schedule and coordinate operations by synchronizing their watches, while the insurgents routinely used commercially procured or stolen government tactical radios to communicate. [redacted]

**Mindanao.** A major 1984 operation took place after the NPA conducted several battalion-sized (100 to 300 men) raids. The military's planned 60-day

offensive began with the deployment of three infantry battalions and a marine brigade. Later additions increased the operation to division size [redacted]

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As in the Luzon offensive, the government claimed to have killed hundreds of NPA members and frequently released press reports detailing impressive victories. US officials traveling in the area said, however, that the government failed to destroy any NPA formations, capture significant weapons, or permanently regain the territory identified as under Communist influence. Although the NPA avoided major confrontations with the government, it continued to carry out frequent "arms grabbing" raids and assassinations of local officials—suggesting that government forces also failed to prevent routine operations by the insurgents [redacted]

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The government's goals and commitments to this operation were questionable, in our view. [redacted]

[redacted] believe that the operation was designed to protect the business interests of several of Marcos's personal associates rather than respond to a deteriorating situation. The NPA reportedly had attacked a logging concern owned by Defense Minister Enrile and a coconut plantation owned by close presidential associate and agricultural magnate Eduardo Cojuangco. According to Philippine military personnel, a company of Marines continued to protect Cojuangco's plantation long after the operation ceased. [redacted]

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**Causes of Failure**

After reviewing the failures of numerous military operations, we judge that reducing the gap between counterinsurgency theory and practice requires major changes in strategy and tactics, communications, maintenance, logistics, supply, training, intelligence, and—most important—a dramatic reduction in corruption. In general, we believe the shortcomings of the armed forces can be divided into two categories, one a group of mutually reinforcing systemic problems that cannot be easily rectified, and another a group of tactical problems that are more amenable to correction by the new leadership. [ ]

**Corruption.** The most daunting challenge facing the government is improving professionalism by reducing corruption, which has abetted the breakdown of morale and discipline and thus severely reduced combat effectiveness. The martial law period expanded the military's opportunity for graft and abuse, as the armed forces absorbed the responsibilities, power, and benefits of the civil government and the oligarchic families; little has changed since.<sup>4</sup> [ ] activities of senior officers include accepting kickbacks and payoffs for multimillion-dollar arms purchases and construction contracts; ensuring centralized control and sole-source bidding on purchase contracts; charging fees to expedite routine civil and military matters; selling military supplies (fuel, ammunition, guns) for personal gain; confiscating unit supplies and salaries for their personal use; and selling assignments—avoidance of duty in Mindanao, for example. [ ]

[ ] troops whose salaries and allowances have been embezzled or confiscated in turn extort food and money from civilians, further alienating Filipinos from the government. In many instances this has bred open hostility to the government and active support for the NPA. [ ]

Corruption also has undermined counterinsurgency operations by redirecting resources needed for legitimate military functions. For example, a series of

articles in the press has traced poor conditions at the AFP Medical Center in Manila to corruption and kickbacks in purchasing of supplies and equipment, favoritism in physician assignments and hiring, and the sale of stolen hospital supplies on the black market. [ ]

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Field reporting also confirms that in many cases corruption has directly undermined combat operations. [ ] and press reporting during mid-1985 confirmed the use of Air Force helicopters by senior officers to make personal visits to their fishery investments, to give rides to local politicians, or to take VIPs on picnics. Pilots told the press they resented being used as "taxi drivers" when their services were needed more to support ground operations. The pilots reported several instances in which they were unable to airlift reinforcements to besieged Army units because their helicopters were being used by senior officers for personal business. They also complained these activities consumed scarce fuel and other resources from the already tight NAFFP budget, further reducing resources for the counterinsurgency. [ ]

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**Inadequate Financing.** Reducing corruption will require that the armed forces meet its second critical challenge, correcting the problem of inadequate financing—a product of a weak economy and a poor revenue collection effort by the national government. [ ]

[ ] Philippine defense budgets have been the lowest in non-Communist East Asia for the last decade. More important, Philippine defense expenditures have remained at or near the bottom regionally in terms of dollars spent per individual member of the armed forces.<sup>5</sup> For example, in 1984—a busy year for counterinsurgency operations—the government in real terms spent only about two-thirds of what it spent on the military in 1980 and approximately half what it spent near the end of the Muslim rebellion in Mindanao in 1977.<sup>6</sup> [ ]

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<sup>5</sup> Junior enlisted personnel receive about \$40 per month, a sergeant about \$75 per month, and a full colonel about \$170 per month. [ ]

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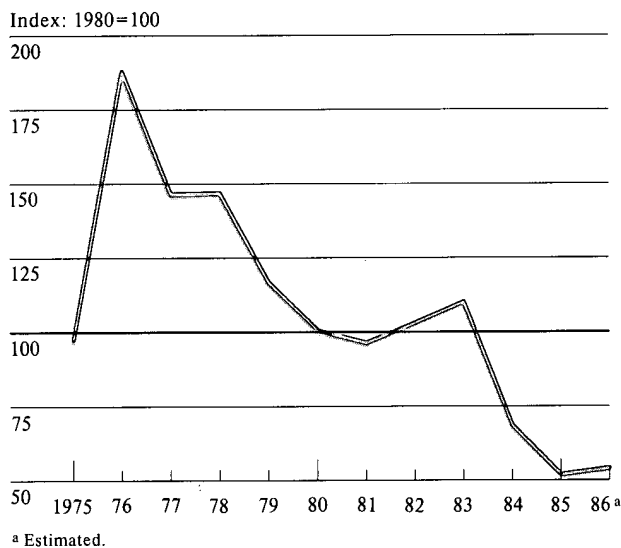
<sup>6</sup> Filipinos often derisively referred to the AFP as "sunshine soldiers" because the military seldom conducted operations at night or in bad weather. [ ]

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**Figure 7**  
**The Philippines: Real Defense**  
**Spending, 1975-86**



Low pay, inadequate subsistence and housing, shortages of supplies and equipment, and poorly equipped and understaffed medical facilities have devastated morale and eroded the will of many soldiers to fight. Earlier this year, for example, Ramos ordered several police and Constabulary units on Bataan disarmed after they refused to fight the NPA without adequate resources and support. [redacted]

Officers who have watched their pay shrink with inflation and whose promotion opportunities have been stymied by repeated extensions of senior officers past retirement have often turned to graft to maintain their standard of living. Even when military personnel have avoided significant corruption, concerns about their careers and making ends meet have distracted them from their professional responsibilities, and fostered, for example, a desire for assignments to Manila, where supplementary job prospects are better and where promising officers can be assigned better paying positions in civilian ministries. [redacted]

The most telling effect of inadequate financial resources emerges in armed forces hardware. Combat operations have been severely hampered by shortages of operational armor, trucks, aircraft, and communications equipment. During the Marcos years, these items were seldom acquired in sufficient numbers, and those acquired usually remained in Manila to protect the government rather than being distributed to field units. [redacted]

Much of the equipment outside Manila, moreover, remains only partly usable because of parts shortages, supply difficulties, and poor maintenance. [redacted]

that, because of parts shortages and inadequate maintenance only about half the military's helicopters and field radios were operational. Paramilitary units such as the Constabulary and Police appear to have fared little better; during a visit to the Zamboanga City Police headquarters early this year, [redacted]

[redacted] only one operational telephone line and no functional field communications equipment. In some regions military personnel simply appropriate civilian vehicles and equipment rather than try to repair their own or obtain new ones from Manila. [redacted]

A shortage of funds for ammunition and fuel has reduced the ability of air and naval forces to support ground force operations. Fuel and ammunition shortages also have curtailed operational training to the extent that combat support—when provided—often is of such poor quality that it is useless against the NPA. [redacted]

[redacted] last year, for example, estimated it would require at least eight weeks of continuous training with no constraints on ammunition or fuel before one of the Philippine Air Force's best helicopter units could meet minimum US readiness standards. [redacted]

To complicate matters, law enforcement and intelligence operations came to a virtual standstill during the last quarter of 1985 after these organizations exceeded their 1985 budgets, [redacted]

[redacted] Some operations appear to have resumed only after Marcos released funds for use during the 1986 snap presidential election. [redacted]

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**Figure 8.** *Not dressed to kill: Philippine soldiers on patrol, Northern Luzon, 1985. Note lack of boots, helmets, uniforms, and web gear. Chief of Staff Ramos recently decreed that all NAFP personnel in the field should wear helmets to distinguish them from Communist insurgents.*

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### Tactical Shortcomings

Government strategy traditionally has been concerned with using regular ground force units (Army and Marines) to complement Constabulary efforts to control the insurgency at the local level. This approach—what then Constabulary Chief Ramos later described as being based on the “Five Pillars Approach”—was discarded by then Chief of Staff Ver with support from Army Chief Ramas in 1983.<sup>7</sup> Counterinsurgency operations under their plan favored large-scale military sweep operations intended to keep the insurgents off balance and prevent them from massing their forces.

five pillars focused on using local police, prosecutors, courts, correction officials, and residents to combat insurgent political and military activities in the provinces. This strategy, of course, favored the Constabulary and Integrated National Police over the other armed services in the effort to reestablish government presence in the countryside. Ramas probably supported Ver's strategy because he expected it to result in organizational realignments that would transfer manpower and resources away from the Constabulary to the Army.

The “clear-hold-consolidate-develop” approach demands large, well-equipped, highly mobile forces that move from area to area defeating insurgent forces, while leaving smaller “territorial forces”—the Constabulary, Police, and Civil Home Defense units—to maintain after-action security. To support this strategy, Manila deactivated the Constabulary's 13 combat battalions and one long-range patrol battalion, dispersing their men and equipment to small, isolated Constabulary companies throughout the countryside. At the same time, the government directed the formation of the 12 Regional Unified Commands (RUCs) and a National Capital Region Command in order to increase its control over military operations and personnel nationwide.

In our judgment, the 1983 strategy and reorganization of the armed forces—which remain part of armed forces doctrine—did little to improve the military's

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*Figure 9. What the well-dressed soldier wears. Elite military units such as the Marines and Army Scout Rangers generally have not experienced the severe manpower and equipment shortages of regular Army field units. Compare the appearance of these troops with those on page 17.*



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performance against the insurgents. For its part, the NPA has simply avoided the large, highly visible government search and destroy operations, often returning to the same area once the military has left. Moreover, by focusing on conventional military operations, the strategy has failed to develop and support the local security, civic action, and psychological operations forces that could remain in an area to prevent NPA reinfiltration after the military has moved on. Because the military did not simultaneously undertake improvements to the notoriously outdated and inadequate supply, logistic, transportation, maintenance, and communication systems, the armed forces never acquired the firepower, mobility, and command and control assets necessary to execute their new strategy effectively.

The Regional Unified Command structure also appears to have accomplished little more than instituting a series of confusing, overlapping layers of authority.

are assigned operational control of all forces in their region, while administrative control was retained by

each unit's parent organization. The chain of command is thus poorly defined, leaving operational commanders without the full authority to obtain manpower and resources to support regional operations. With decisionmaking and access to resources thus centralized at regional headquarters and in Manila, local commanders often have had little incentive—or reason—to demonstrate initiative.

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The military's use of large-scale, short-duration, search and destroy operations also has played into insurgent hands by denying government forces the elements of surprise and continuing presence in the countryside. Because the troops involved in these operations usually stage from areas that are under guerrilla surveillance—and because government plans are usually known in advance because of poor military security—the local NPA commander is able to determine ahead of time whether he will stage an ambush or avoid battle.

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Once a sweep operation is completed, the government typically declares the area free of NPA and the military moves on to the next assignment, leaving small, widely dispersed Army, Police, and Constabulary units to prevent the NPA from returning. The insurgents typically reinfiltate immediately, occasionally overrunning the poorly defended government forces in response to local complaints about military abuses during the sweep operation. In other cases, the NPA may simply harass the garrison, or leave it alone after working out a mutual noninterference agreement with local military officials.

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## Appendix B

### Lessons of the Past

#### Defeating the Huks

In 1942 the Philippine Communist Party (PKP) formed the *Hukbalahap*—or People's Anti-Japanese Army—to conduct guerrilla warfare against Japanese occupation troops. The “Huk” insurgency that began in the aftermath of World War II initially was formed from the remnants of these guerrilla forces. Although some of the PKP's leaders were committed to Marxist-Leninist ideology, many insurgents were World War II guerrillas who became disenchanted when President Roxas prevented the party from assuming seats it had won in the country's first post-independence Congress. At its height in 1950, the Huks' military wing—the People's Liberation Army—numbered close to 12,500 full-time troops with a support base of about 100,000 out of a national population of approximately 19 million. The insurgency was centered in densely populated Central Luzon, but, as the movement gained momentum, party leaders attempted to expand into Southern Luzon and the Visayan Islands. [ ]

The Philippine Army, in disarray after the war, was being rebuilt when the Huks began launching military operations in 1946. At that time, the task of counterinsurgency largely fell to the Philippine Constabulary—a force of about 12,000—which was plagued by inadequate logistics and supply, low pay, poor morale, and a legendary reputation for abusing the civil populace. From 1946 to 1950, government counterinsurgency initiatives were ineffectual and vacillated between periods of truce and harsh crackdowns, which further alienated the local population. [ ]

By the late 1940s the Huks had established shadow governments—areas containing an insurgent military presence and party control over the local government apparatus—throughout substantial areas in Central Luzon. They then began expanding operations southward with the hope of overthrowing the government. In 1950 President Elpidio Quirino—frightened by rapid political and military gains by the insurgents—appointed Congressman Ramon Magsaysay as

Secretary of National Defense and gave him a blank check to reinvigorate the government's counterinsurgency effort. [ ]

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Once in charge, Magsaysay quickly implemented a comprehensive civil-military counterinsurgency plan:

- He tightened discipline and improved morale in the military by personally assuming authority over all officer promotions. He performed surprise inspections of frontline units and promoted or demoted soldiers and officers as the situation warranted.
- He improved the military's operational performance by emphasizing persistent patrolling and ambushes and long-range patrols by elite forces, and by expanding intelligence capabilities. He reassigned 8,000 Constabulary troops to the Army, expanding its combat-ready status to 25,000 men, and then granted the Army exclusive control over counterinsurgency.
- He improved intelligence collation and dissemination by assigning the Military Intelligence Service as the focal point for all collected and disseminated intelligence. This ensured that interservice rivalries and bureaucratic snafus did not restrict the timely flow of information.
- He moved to better military-civil relations by enforcing strict guidelines for interaction between military forces and local populations. This effort reduced military abuses and increased public support for the counterinsurgency effort.
- He offset Communist claims that government policies made land unavailable to peasants by creating the Economic Development Corporation in 1950. This body eventually resettled an estimated 5,000 insurgents and their families to government land on Mindanao.

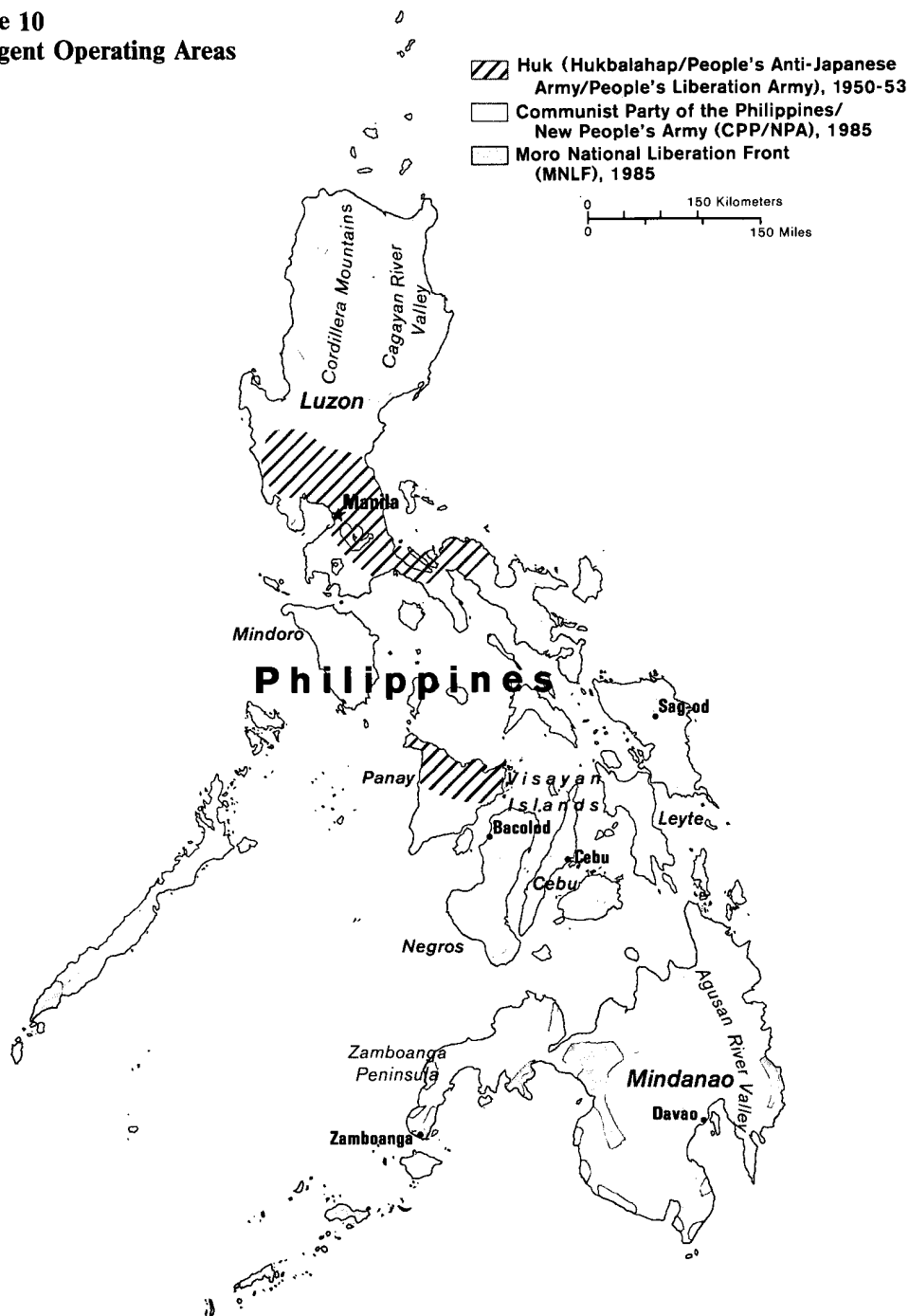
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**Figure 10**  
**Insurgent Operating Areas**



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- He countered Communist exploitation of local grievances by attaching a Civil Affairs Unit to every battalion. These groups were responsible for psychological warfare operations, advising commanders on civilian issues, and reporting troop discipline and behavior directly back to the Defense Secretary.
- He restored the legitimacy of the government by having the military vigorously safeguard the results of the 1951 congressional elections. [ ]

The 1951 elections were the turning point in the counterinsurgency campaign, and most observers credit Magsaysay with facilitating the most honest election in Philippine history. The results, although devastating for Quirino's Liberalista Party, undermined the Communists' claim that the government was unable to hold a fair election and bolstered public faith in the democratic process. [ ]

The combination of the popular attitude toward the government and improved military tactics rapidly eroded support for the insurgency and led to divisive infighting within the PKP. By 1952 the balance had tipped in the government's favor. The Huks, concerned about dwindling support for their cause, then shifted to a disastrous strategy of engaging government forces in large-scale conventional warfare. These tactics played into the hands of the military, which, as a result of US assistance, was by then better trained and equipped to conduct conventional operations. The mopping-up process was further propelled by Magsaysay's election to the presidency in 1953 and his later enactment of a liberal land reform program. The final indication that the Huk insurgency had been virtually defeated came when one of its key leaders—Luis Taruc—surrendered in 1954. [ ]

### Containing the MNLF

Unlike the Huks, who sought to overthrow the government, the Moro National Liberal Front, a loose coalition of ethnically diverse Muslim rebels who believe that Manila's Christian-dominated government will never treat them equitably, attempted to establish an autonomous Muslim state in the southernmost regions of Mindanao. It was Marcos's declaration of martial law in 1972, however, that prompted

the factionalized Muslims to band together as the MNLF and take up armed struggle against the government. [ ]

The Muslim insurgency peaked after a cease-fire was arranged in 1976 to facilitate Libyan-sponsored peace talks. By that time, the approximately 21,000 full-time armed guerrillas had forced Manila to commit over 75 percent of its military combat units—accounting for roughly 35,000 to 40,000 troops from Army, Marine, and Philippine Constabulary commands—to Southern Mindanao. Marcos effectively ended the insurgency in 1977 by paying off many of the rebel leaders while using the peace talks to restrict financial support to the MNLF. Although the MNLF broke off negotiations and ended the cease-fire in 1977, military encounters between government forces and Muslim rebels have never returned to previous levels. Nevertheless, the MNLF today retains influence throughout Southwestern Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago. [ ]

One innovation that the government implemented to contain the MNLF was to transfer greater security responsibilities to local civil defense forces. These forces—which in 1985 numbered about 90,000 nationwide—were first formed on Mindanao after military units sustained heavy casualties during tactical operations. Military planners believed the home defense units would be more effective than regular troops because they would be familiar with the area and its residents and thus less likely to abuse the local population and build popular resentment against the government. [ ]

Along with military operations, Marcos worked to co-opt politically several of the movement's larger factions by offering their leaders large sums of money and land in exchange for their accepting government amnesty proposals. As this dual strategy gained ground, the government began reducing the security responsibility of military units in the area, in part to deploy troops to the Visayas and Luzon to combat the fledgling NPA. By 1981 military units in the Muslim areas of Mindanao had been reduced to approximately 25,000 troops, and by early 1986 this was down to fewer than 3,000 men. [ ]

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Manila's military efforts against the MNLF were aided by a series of highly successful diplomatic initiatives orchestrated by Marcos in the Middle East. By conducting personal diplomacy with several Arab leaders, including King Khalid of Saudi Arabia in 1982, Marcos capitalized on competition between moderate and radical Arab states to undercut political and materiel support for the MNLF. He achieved much of this in 1976 after concluding the Tripoli agreement—a pact that promised the Muslims regional autonomy within the framework of the Philippine Constitution. Although Manila subsequently reneged on much of the agreement, striking the deal was sufficient to convince moderate states such as Saudi Arabia that the Philippine Government had made concessions to the MNLF. These efforts were an important factor in reducing foreign weapons supplies from countries such as Syria and Libya.

#### **Early Efforts Against the NPA**

Because the initial efforts of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) in the early 1970s to build a political and military organization mirrored the earlier Huk effort by being centered in Central Luzon, the military was able to concentrate its forces against the movement and deal it several costly defeats. The party responded by dispersing its few political and military cadres throughout remote areas of Luzon, the Visayas, and Mindanao while substantially restricting all military operations. Meanwhile, party efforts to construct a grassroots political organization continued uninterrupted.

The military was preoccupied with subduing the MNLF throughout most of the 1970s and paid little attention to the then seemingly dormant NPA. By mid-decade, however, the tide in the Muslim insurgency had turned and Marcos reportedly decided to demonstrate his political and military strength by cracking down on all opposition, including the Communist insurgency. Between 1976 and 1977, 13 Communist Party Central Committee members were arrested, including the movement's leader, Jose Maria Sison. The government also captured the NPA's Commander, Bernabe Buscayno, and Victor Corpuz,

a Philippine Military Academy instructor who defected to the NPA and became its top guerrilla instructor. (Sison, Buscayno, and Corpuz have since been released by Aquino.) After the arrests, Marcos announced that the Communist insurgency had been defeated and he focused nearly all the military's resources on defeating the MNLF. As late as 1979, for example, only eight battalions, or about 4,800 troops, were assigned to areas of NPA activity.

The government's belief that it had broken the back of the CPP began to erode during 1980. In that year the party declared that the NPA was ready to engage government troops in combat, and almost immediately the number of violent incidents rose sharply. The government responded to the increased violence by deploying an additional 12 battalions, or about 7,200 men, to Communist insurgent areas by 1982. Most of these deployments reflected the government's concern over the CPP's change in tactics, although some troop movements were a natural consequence of the decline in Muslim insurgent activity.

After several embarrassing encounters in 1980 between the military and insurgents on the central island of Samar, Marcos ordered the creation of the Eastern Visayas Command. Troops were deployed from Muslim areas to Samar to conduct sweep operations against the insurgents. Communist insurgent efforts to build a strong grassroots organization on Samar paid off, however, and the military encountered a populace unwilling to assist in the fight against the NPA.<sup>8</sup> Despite little support from the public, the situation quieted down substantially after several encounters between the insurgents and the military, and by 1982 most observers believed that the insurgents had been defeated. Troops were dispersed to other areas—including the Bicol Region in Southern Luzon—that were also experiencing increased insurgent activity.

<sup>8</sup> Manila traditionally has ignored the sparsely populated island and provided little in the way of services for the locals. The military reportedly has committed several widely publicized human rights violations on the island and is feared by many inhabitants.

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This move proved premature. [redacted]

had merely gone underground and insurgent political and military infrastructure had remained unscathed by military operations. These concerns have since been confirmed by renewed and larger scale NPA activity over the past several years. Samar has been the site of several recent spectacular insurgent raids involving groups of several hundred guerrillas. [redacted]

The government launched its next drive against the Communist insurgents in the Bicol Region in mid-1982. The military deployed 10 battalions to the area—out of a total of 36 pitted against the NPA—intent on stamping out the Communist presence threatening Manila's southern doorstep. The operation was touted as Marcos's pilot counterinsurgency program, to be tested in the Bicol and then employed nationwide. Marcos noted in widely circulated press releases that more than a military effort was necessary to defeat the NPA, which, according to the President, had grown mainly out of poor economic conditions in the countryside. Marcos announced a four-phase military/civic action program that called for:

- Military operations to stabilize the region by routing out the NPA.
- Restoring local order by instituting legal proceedings against CPP/NPA members and sympathizers.
- Rebuilding civilian administration to answer local needs.
- Providing long-term economic development to prevent the return of the NPA. [redacted]

As in the Samar experience, NPA activities abated somewhat in the Bicol after the government's deployment of troops. Little was accomplished, however, in the way of lasting civic action programs or the reestablishment of government authority in areas frequented by insurgents. [redacted]

In response to an NPA offensive in Northeastern Mindanao in late 1982, meanwhile, Manila redeployed five battalions from Muslim areas in the south and dispatched a combat-tested Marine battalion

from Luzon to the region, raising to 16 the number of combat battalions—about 9,600 men—active against the NPA on Mindanao by mid-1983. [redacted]

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Manila also took several other steps to improve the security situation in eastern Mindanao:

- The Southern Command relieved the Philippine Constabulary, notorious in the region for its poor human rights record, of many of its operational combat responsibilities on Mindanao.
- Marcos ordered the military to coordinate a civil and military response to the NPA.
- The head of the Southern Command, established an advance command post in Davao City that, according to US officials, boosted public confidence in the government.
- Local paramilitary Home Defense Forces were expanded with new recruits and given frontline defense responsibilities such as patrolling and participating in regular military operations. They also began collecting intelligence on Communist personnel and organization. [redacted]

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Insurgent political and military infrastructure apparently suffered little damage from the counterinsurgency operation. Although government tallies of violent incidents rose marginally after operations began—indicating that the government was indeed engaging the enemy more frequently—the NPA successfully avoided major encounters with government troops. The increased concentration of military personnel, moreover, provided the insurgents with increased opportunities to steal arms from the government or—according to press reports—even to buy them from poorly paid government troops. [redacted]

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Manila's efforts on Mindanao to involve local officials in the effort and improve civil-military relations also met with little success. For example, Marcos apparently made no effort to enforce his civic action decree, according to the US Embassy, thus ensuring that poor administrative and social service practices remained

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unchanged. In addition, the political gains made by relieving the Constabulary from operations were more than offset by the new and more serious crop of human rights abuses perpetrated by the newly expanded Home Defense Forces. [REDACTED]

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Current Philippine Government estimates of full-time guerrillas on Mindanao underscore the government's failure to undercut insurgent growth on the island. In late 1982 the government estimated that there were about 2,500 full-time guerrillas on the island, concentrated in Northeastern Mindanao and in the Zamboanga Peninsula. In early 1986 military intelligence estimated the number of NPA regulars on Mindanao to be in excess of 9,000 men. [REDACTED]

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Guerrillas operate freely in many areas of the island,

[REDACTED] Spectacular raids—including several against poorly defended military garrisons in the northeastern part of the island—demonstrate the NPA's advanced capabilities. Several Philippine officers, moreover, told [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] already had stalemated the government in many areas of Mindanao. [REDACTED]

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## Appendix D

### Dealing With the NPA Political Base

Armed forces attempts to neutralize the NPA political base in the countryside are severely complicated by abuses of the local population. Because of corruption, reasonably designed but poorly executed military operations to isolate the insurgents from their source of local support often have alienated large numbers of even progovernment Filipinos with heavyhanded and insensitive actions. [ ]

Relocation and "evacuation" schemes, for example, were first used during the 1970s to protect small farmers on Mindanao from NPA intimidation. By 1981, however, the initial voluntary programs had degenerated into forced relocations of persons suspected of supporting the NPA, or into evacuations of areas to permit the AFP to establish "free-fire zones" where it could operate against the NPA without concern for civilian casualties. The most widely publicized relocations and evacuations took place around Davao del Norte, where the AFP attempted to forcibly relocate some 20,000 small farmers and their families between September 1981 and March 1982. Similar relocations—some voluntary, but most forced—were reported on other parts of Mindanao, in Abra Province on Northern Luzon, and on Samar and Panay Islands. In March 1982 the government ordered a halt to the Mindanao relocations after the press began to refer to them as "strategic hamlets" similar to those used by the South Vietnamese during the 1960s. [ ]

Despite curtailment of the large-scale Mindanao relocations, field commanders continued to relocate or evacuate families and communities to further tactical operations. In September 1985, for example, Manila newspapers reported that approximately 1,000 persons on the island of Leyte had been relocated to protect them from retribution by NPA tax collectors. In other areas of Leyte, however, many locals evacuated their homes only after the military told them they would be declared NPA sympathizers if they did not leave. According to other press reports, an earlier evacuation of some 1,000 persons near Bacolod in Negros Occidental Province last June was undertaken to create free-fire zones. [ ]

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#### *The Lost Command*

*After its war with the Moros in the 1970s, the armed forces augmented its regular military forces with scores of paramilitary groups and provided covert support to irregular units of questionable ability and reputation. Some groups the armed forces openly sanctioned, such as the North Cotabato CHDF unit formed from the 300 members of the Ilagas (rats) gang of the Manero family. With other groups, however, government support was covert in an effort to dissociate the military from violent, abusive, and extralegal activities.* [ ]

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*The most notorious of these covertly supported groups is the "Lost Command," a violent band of perhaps some 50 "rehabilitated" former servicemen led since its inception by retired Constabulary Lt. Col. Carlos Lademora. According to the US Embassy, since 1975 the Lost Command has operated on Samar and Leyte Islands, and in Agusan del Sur, Suriago, Davao, and Cotabato Provinces on Northern Mindanao. The unit achieved its greatest notoriety in September 1981 when it reportedly massacred more than 35 men, women, and children near Sag-od in Northern Samar Province, while providing security for a logging firm associated with Defense Minister Enrile. The massacre reportedly was a reprisal for an earlier NPA attack that wounded several unit members. The Embassy reports that by late 1984 the unit had such a reputation for violence and abuse that most of its high-level patrons ceased using it to secure their properties in the south. The Command's last known assignment was to protect goldfields in its home province of Agusan del Sur. Chief of Staff Ramos in March 1986 issued a directive that outlawed this and similar groups and forbade military personnel from associating with them.* [ ]

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To improve the timeliness of tactical intelligence, nonuniformed AFP members frequently rounded up large numbers of suspects and intensively and often abusively interrogated them until they obtained the desired information. Popularly called "zoning," these dragnet operations also were used to neutralize local NPA troops and their supporters by forcing the suspects to return to their communities and identify those who cooperated with the insurgents. According to press, this tactic was widely used last year to support government sweep operations in Abra and Bataan Provinces on Luzon, and in Davao and Misamis Oriental Provinces on Mindanao. [ ]

Food blockades—or "resource control" in the jargon of the military—are another tactic local commanders were permitted to use in areas where the NPA commands support. Rather than evacuate or relocate villages, this tactic stressed blockading communities and consuming or destroying excess food to limit supplies to the NPA. According to the press, this was employed most frequently in Northern Luzon and Northeastern Mindanao. During August and September 1985 it also was employed by Task Force Samat against several communities in Bataan. Although the food blockades were useful in denying support to the insurgents during AFP tactical operations, the frequently overzealous, arbitrary, and abusive manner in which they were implemented only further strained AFP relations with local communities. General Ramos responded to criticism of this tactic by repeatedly emphasizing that resource control was used by local commanders only on a case-by-case basis, and that it was not a national policy. [ ]

In our judgment, relocation and evacuation, zoning, and food blockades fail as counterinsurgency instruments because they focus armed forces attention on the movement and control of people rather than on how to protect them once relocated. For their part, the civil authorities—few in some areas and short of resources in all areas—frequently decided the relocated, evacuated, or blockaded persons were the military's responsibility. As a result, the civil government failed to provide the required health care, housing, food, and jobs, while the military failed to provide protection or prevent NPA reinfiltration. All too often the final outcome was to undercut popular support for the government by disrupting viable communities, increasing unemployment, and furthering economic dislocation. [ ]

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